

A Chapter in Iowa-Russian Relations

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A Chapter in Iowa-Russian Relations

By HENRY BORZO*

From the port of Riga, in Tsarist Russia, Dr. J. B. Hubbell, American Red Cross official and a native Iowan, reported that American flags were "crossed over the hotel entrances," that the shop windows displayed title pages of sheet music bearing the American flag in colors, 'Hail Columbia,' 'Yankee Doodle,' 'The Star Spangled Banner,' and that "children are carrying our flags in the streets."¹

The occasion for this was the arrival of another American ship with food in the spring of 1892 for the famine-stricken areas of Russia. Russia experienced one of her worst famines in 1891-92, and many committees were formed in America to aid the sufferers. The ship which had just arrived was the *Tynehead*. It was the fourth such ship to leave America and carried a "cargo almost exclusively from Iowa."² The man who did more than any other individual to make this gift from Iowa possible was Benjamin F. Tillinghast, at that time associate editor of the *Davenport Democrat*. This paper is based largely on his unpublished correspondence.³

Though it may be true that "famine in old Russia was

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¹ Tillinghast, B. F., "A Far-Reaching Charity, II," *The Midland Monthly* (1894), Vol. I, p. 415.

² *Ibid.*, p. 325.

³ *Records and Correspondence of Iowa Commission for Russian Famine Relief, 1892*, Two volumes, Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines.

endemic,"⁴ Russia suffered at this time from one of the most disastrous famines in her history. It was estimated "that from thirty to thirty-five millions of people were sufferers."⁵ Upon the heels of the famine came typhus and cholera which claimed many lives, including that of Tschaikowsky, who had "made a triumphal visit to America in 1891."⁶ America, blessed with a great harvest in 1891, responded generously. Millers in Minneapolis organized a gift of flour; Nebraskans contributed one and a half million pounds of corn meal; Secretary of State Blaine forwarded \$11.51 to Russia from the public schools of Florence, South Carolina;⁷ Iowa set up a Russian Famine Relief Commission which collected the corn sent to Russia on the Tynehead.

FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

Already in the summer of 1891 Iowans knew something of Russia's difficulty; at least observant readers knew, said Tillinghast, that there had been serious crop failures.⁸ A short article in the *Davenport Democrat* for July 24 told of credits and tax deferments on account of the failure of the harvest in one district in Russia, and that public subscriptions for relief had been opened. A month later the citizens of Davenport read that the Russian government was "making an extensive inquiry into the stock of wheat" and taking measures to relieve the distressed districts.⁹ "Europe must depend on the United States for bread," said one editorial, and "it is to the European market that the Iowa farmer must look for his profit."¹⁰ The practical and the charitable were subtly interwoven from the beginning in our responses to Russia's dilemma. On September 4,

⁴ Maynard, Sir John, *Russia in Flux*, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1948, p. 29.

⁵ Barton, Clara, *The Red Cross in Peace and War*, American Historical Press, 1899, p. 176.

⁶ Bailey, Thomas, *America Faces Russia*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N. Y., 1950, p. 150.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸ Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

⁹ *Davenport Democrat*, August 19, 1891.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, August 33 (sic.), 1891.

one Iowa paper reported Secretary of Agriculture Rusk saying that he was confident we could "extend our market for corn by introducing it into Germany as an article of food in place of rye."¹¹

But other than practical and charitable considerations went into the making up of our response. Our disapproval of Tsarist policies in general and in connection with the Jews, in particular, was also important. Iowa papers reflected more concern with such problems than with that of the famine in the summer and fall of 1891. One paper stated that "any Russian Christian who wished to possess himself of the property of a Jewish neighbor can obtain it by paying one-tenth of its value to the mayor or government . . . it has become a common saying in parts of Russia 'kill a Jew and pay 20 roubles [\$20].' No other punishment is ever imposed for killing a Jew."¹² This same paper contended that the government "did not take a single step" to prevent attacks upon the Jews.¹³ Another paper spoke of farm workers that looted Hebrew shops and killed some of their inmates.¹⁴

Our attitude to the Jews and Russia was not, however, all in favor of the Jews and opposed to Russia. An account of Russian peasants near Vilna who murdered a Jew and his family who "had bought up several million roubles worth of rye," was not overly sympathetic to the Jew.¹⁵ Perhaps some disapproval of Russia and her treatment of the Jews was the result of articles which contended that most of the Jews who left Russia "will start by different lines for the United States."¹⁶ Prophetic as one editorial was, in stating that the "Jew as a national will soon become a fact and . . . Palestine will be his home,"¹⁷ many more were no

¹¹ *The Daily Nonpareil*, Council Bluffs, Sept. 4, 1891.

¹² *Boone County Republican*, Aug. 5, 1891.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 1891.

¹⁴ *Milton Herald*, Aug. 13, 1891.

¹⁵ *Davenport Democrat*, Sept. 4, 1891.

¹⁶ *Milton Herald*, Aug. 13, 1891.

¹⁷ *The Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, Sept. 20, 1891.

doubt impressed with Baron Hirsch's scheme to provide homes for the Jews in America.¹⁸ That not all Iowa press opinion was unqualifiedly in sympathy with the Jews in Russia was best borne out by an editorial which stated that the "oppression of the czar" was "very weak, almost tender—even compassionate in comparison with the oppression this people have stood at other Christian hands," and in other ages in history.¹⁹

Whether we were more annoyed at Russia or at the Jews who profiteered upon the famine situation or merely at the thought of large numbers of them coming here, is hard to say; that there was criticism of Russia, however, was clear and maybe not unmixed with fear. A Council Bluffs paper, quoting from an article in *Harpers*, spoke of the 120,000,000 inhabitants of an immense empire that "represents a mysterious and terrible force—a force that will surely astonish the world. The world has there an incommensurable unknown quantity, an epopee in the germ, which will be the astonishment of our sons, terrible perhaps, or consoling and prolific."²⁰

There was thus more in the papers about the mistreatment of Jews than about the famine with which it was linked. It had not yet occurred to us to do anything about the famine. Early in September there was a severe drop in the temperature in Iowa and one editorial stated that had it been a "few degrees lower . . . the great bulk of the corn . . . would have been caught in the roasting ear and would have been worthless."²¹ It was not till the end of September that the corn crop was safe and that it was certain there would be a "har-

¹⁸ *Davenport Democrat*, Sept. 27, 1891. Baron Hirsch was a fabulously wealthy European capitalist and philanthropist, the scion of a prominent Jewish banking family in Bavaria. He founded the Jewish Colonization Association, one of the greatest charitable trusts in the world, and gave \$53,526,000.00 to this English society for the relief of oppressed and persecuted Jews in many lands. In 1891 he founded a benevolent trust in the United States for the benefit of Jewish immigrants, endowing it with \$2,398,938.00.

¹⁹ *Davenport Democrat*, June 14, 1891.

²⁰ *The Daily Nonpareil*, Council Bluffs, Sept. 10, 1891.

²¹ *Milton Herald*, Sept. 3, 1891.

vest of two billions of bushels of corn in the country, the largest yield ever known."²²

This same paper reported that "agents from Iowa, Nebraska and other corn producing states are now engaged in visiting the country fairs in England and on the continent and are instructing the people how to prepare this great American grain as food for man."²³ Another paper urged Iowa "as a state to print and circulate chemical and scientific facts which are within reach . . . It [corn] is often called for at the tables of the best hotels . . . It is healthful."²⁴ With not too many articles in the press as yet about the sufferings of the Russians, we could concentrate, as soon as we knew we had a good crop, on the marketing of that crop. American farmers were reminded that "if it were not for the foreign market" they would be "paupers, comparatively speaking, in the midst of riches."²⁵ But Europe was short of supply. "Happily for the hungry of the old world, this country has been blessed with an unprecedented grain crop . . . and the golden stream [money]²⁶ has already begun to flow into the country. This large influx of the precious metal cannot be otherwise than beneficial to every branch of business. Gradually the yellow stream will reach every channel and stimulate every trade."²⁷

Beginning in October, notices of the severity of the famine in Russia became fuller and appeared more frequently. One article stated that entire states were being deserted, that "the people have been driven to pillage on each other," and that "the officers of the imperial guard have decided not to drink champagne at any of the regimental banquets" but "to contribute the money which would have been so spent to the peasants of the famine stricken territories."²⁸ It was reported

²² *The Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, Sept. 30, 1891.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Davenport Democrat*, Sept. 20, 1891.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Sept. 17, 1891.

²⁶ Those who think mercantilism went out as Adam Smith walked in, please note. The Relief Commission that was later formed also decided against sending any money out of the state.

²⁷ *Davenport Democrat*, Sept. 29, 1891.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 8, 1891.

that fourteen million people were in urgent need of aid and that scurvy and typhus already raged in the famine-stricken districts.²⁹ In some districts the local government was not able to cope with the situation.³⁰ The government was reported as purchasing grain for the famishing peasants.³¹ Later in October, the number estimated without food rose to twenty millions.³²

Meanwhile, further reports were received about Jewish persecutions: "The police have given notice to the bankers that no dealing with, or through, the house of Rothschilds will be permitted in Russia,"³³ and the government "is about to issue an order prohibiting Jews from entering into contracts to supply the government with spirituous liquors or sell the same for export."³⁴ In one city, it was reported, fifty Jews were killed and hundreds were wounded while thousands fled to the forests.³⁵ The thought of aiding the sufferers may have been prevented from being born in the face of the anti-Semitism of the Russian government. The aid given the Jews by the Nihilist Societies³⁶ of America, may have caused some to think "a plague on both your houses." Persecution and famine were explained in a letter from "an Ex-Diplomatist" in terms of an impoverished nobility, an indolent and drunken peasantry, and a reactionary government. He maintained that the persecution was neither racial nor religious, but only because the Jews and Germans were more prosperous.³⁷ Most Iowans were probably confused by the many contradictory accounts.

Meanwhile in October, Iowans read that they had led all states in the production of corn, producing some

²⁹ *Davenport Democrat*, Oct. 14, 1891.

³⁰ *Iowa State Register*, Oct. 23, 1891.

³¹ *Davenport Democrat*, Oct. 14, 1891.

³² *Iowa State Register*, Oct. 25, 1891.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Davenport Democrat*, Oct. 25, 1891.

³⁵ *The Cherokee Times*, Oct. 29, 1891.

³⁶ *Davenport Democrat*, Oct. 8, 1891; the nihilists opposed all organized governments, and in Russia they assassinated several high government officials.

³⁷ *Davenport Democrat*, Oct. 25 and Nov. 8, 1891.

300,000,000 bushels of the total crop of two billion bushels—the value of which crop had set a record.³⁸ It was also clear and not confusing at all that Europe's need was America's opportunity; as notices appeared about the forthcoming Russian *ukase* or decree prohibiting the export of wheat, the price of that commodity rose.³⁹ But most editorials could hardly be concerned with Russia with American elections just around the corner; most editorials were concerned with those elections—and the question of prohibition.⁴⁰

The elections over, Governor Boies re-elected, and Thanksgiving being proclaimed, men's minds could now turn to other things—particularly since the reports of suffering in Russia began to be longer and to appear more frequently. "In some districts the people eat food refused by the stock," said one article.⁴¹ It said that "mothers kill their children in order to prevent them starving to death." The Russian Senator Baranoff said that 32,000,000 of the poor in Russia were faced with starvation.⁴² It was reported that the Russian government was doing "everything in its power to help," and that "the czar made a large donation from his private purse."⁴³ Men were "rendered desperate by pangs of hunger," and the nobility would be held accountable for all disturbances.⁴⁴

In the face of these reports of suffering, and in view of our most bountiful harvest, it was not unnatural that many people should have given thought to aiding the distressed, for even in Russia, with the worst of governments, the Czar personally contributed to relief. The first, this writer has found, who made a concrete move to furnish aid to the sufferers were the Nihilist Societies

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Oct. 19 and 26, 1891.

³⁹ *Iowa State Register*, Oct. 30 and Nov. 7, 1891.

⁴⁰ It may be of incidental interest to note that it seemed as difficult then, as now, to tell just where some politicians stood on the "beverage" question.

⁴¹ *Iowa State Register*, Nov. 7, 1891.

⁴² *Davenport Democrat*, Nov. 8, 1891.

⁴³ *Iowa State Register*, Nov. 18, 1891.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Nov. 14, 1891.

of America who had contributed \$5,300 in October.⁴⁵ On November 13 Frances E. Willard of the Womens Christian Temperance Union urged giving relief to the sufferers in her annual report. In the convention on that day the delegates raised \$200 which was sent to Countess Tolstoi.⁴⁶

In Iowa, Governor Boies issued a proclamation of Thanksgiving on November 18, urging all to "offer up prayers for a continuance of that Divine pleasure which has so generously protected us, and to implore its interposition in behalf of the unfortunate in every part of the world."⁴⁷ Three days later, Loran W. Reynolds from Boone wrote a letter to the editor of the *Iowa State Register* and asked, "Why should not the great State of Iowa respond to this demand upon humanity? Why not agitate the matter through the state, and procure donations for the relief of these sufferers?"⁴⁸ The letter contended that Russia had been our friend during the Civil war when England and France were hostile; this friendship should be remembered now in her hour of need. An editorial in the *Davenport Democrat*, of which Tillinghast was associate editor, made its appeal on November 23 by suggesting that "if a few shiploads of American food products could be sent to famine-stricken Russia the Czar's subjects would have a day of Thanksgiving worth celebrating. While this favored land is feasting thousands of Russians are dying." Meanwhile, the price of corn had risen from 58½ cents per bushel on November 20, to 76 cents on November 27; the *ukase* prohibiting the export of wheat and wheat products was issued in Russia on November 21 (our calendar)⁴⁹ and notice was received that the German government had decided to recognize American corn as a food staple.⁵⁰ The latter two items of news no

⁴⁵ *Davenport Democrat*, Oct. 8, 1891.

⁴⁶ Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁴⁷ *Davenport Democrat*, Nov. 18, 1891.

⁴⁸ Nov. 24, 1891.

⁴⁹ *Iowa State Register*, Nov. 22, 1891.

⁵⁰ *Davenport Democrat*, Nov. 19, 1891.

doubt helped to raise the price of wheat and corn. We had many reasons to be grateful—and charitable.

An editorial on Thanksgiving day said that appeals had been made to various charitable organizations to do something for the starving Russians and that, though American hearts were ready to give, their hands could not reach the Russians because their government had subordinated everything to the military; it concluded we should send flour to the people who were starving and "powder for the people who rule in Russia";⁵¹ powder to blow them up we presume. The influence of George Kennan's reporting on Russia, which was very critical, was perhaps still being felt; Tillinghast said that if Kennan's version of Russia was accepted the people would expect Russian officials to "confiscate the supplies, burn the ships that transported them, and send to Siberia any Americans with the temerity to go and proffer the food."⁵² President Harrison's Third Annual Message in December was also hardly a key-note speech for a round of charitable projects; he drew attention to Russia's revival of anti-Semitic laws bringing many more immigrants from that quarter to the United States "which may make it difficult to find homes and employment for them here and to seriously affect the labor market."⁵³

The persistent accounts of suffering gradually made inroads upon our critical attitude, however. The millers of Minneapolis had already begun to solicit for flour to be sent to the hungry of Russia. At least one Iowa paper knew of this and commented on it, referring to it as "a work of brotherly love and world-wide charity."⁵⁴

But there was more than a critical attitude to overcome. Much of the delay in getting some work of relief organized was that many people had been confused by the reports from Russia. An example of this would

⁵¹ *Iowa State Register*, Nov. 26, 1891.

⁵² Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁵³ Richardson, J. (Ed.), *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Washington, D.C., 1898, Vol. IX, p. 188.

⁵⁴ *Davenport Democrat*, Dec. 7, 1891.

be the impressions gained from two quite different reports as to whether the Russians cared to accept aid. One news item reported the *Moscow Gazette* as denouncing the "acceptance of foreign aid for the distressed people of Russia, especially English aid," and that "Madame Tolstoi . . . said she doubted whether the government would consent to act as a mediator for the distribution of foreign assistance."⁵⁵ On the same day this article appeared in an Iowa newspaper, A. Greger of the Russian Legation in Washington, wrote his view to Secretary of State Blaine, which was shortly to be also publicized: "We are willing to forward from New York to Russia all flour, grains, etc., donated . . . the Russian Government has already answered to an offer of aid . . . instructing my legation to say that: 'the imperial Government accepted with gratitude this generous offer.'"⁵⁶

Thoughts of Christmas now gave the final impetus to the charitable motivations inaugurated at Thanksgiving time. "The true Christmas spirit ought not to be forgetful of these famishing sufferers," said one editorial.⁵⁷ Three days before Christmas, Governor Boies issued a proclamation which asked that food be sent to the starving Russians. This proclamation was sent to the governor of every state.⁵⁸ An Iowa Russian Relief Commission was appointed, to be headed by Hiram C. Wheeler.⁵⁹ An editorial the day before Christmas pointed out that Iowa had about two million people among whom hunger was unknown; it asked, "is it not Christ-like to think of those entirely destitute of the means of keeping body and soul together . . . This destitution . . . is owing to the failure of crops for two seasons . . . The Russian government will do, and it is doing its best, but millions will perish before the Spring . . . multi-

⁵⁵ *Iowa State Register*, Dec. 16, 1891.

⁵⁶ Letter, A. Greger to James G. Blaine, Dec. 16, 1891.

⁵⁷ *Davenport Democrat*, Dec. 20, 1891.

⁵⁸ Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁵⁹ *Davenport Democrat*, Dec. 23, 1891; Wheeler, the Republican candidate, had been defeated by Governor Boies in the November election of 1891.

tudes are living on grass and the foliage of trees . . . stories are circulated that . . . women have sold themselves to anyone who will give them food."⁶⁰

There was also room, however, the day before Christmas, for some practical thoughts. Another paper pointed out that Secretary of Agriculture Rusk and Senator Paddock have "hit upon a good idea by which they propose to do a humanitarian act, and at the same time prove to the Russian government that American corn is a first class food product . . . This government has been trying for over twenty years to introduce corn abroad as food, without great success."⁶¹

At least one paper continued for a little longer to harp about the short-comings of the Russian government. One man who had stolen a few turnips was reported as sentenced to penal servitude for life.⁶² It was pointed out that some of the richest merchants in St. Petersburg were not touched by the distress, and that furthermore the truth of the whole situation was being withheld from the Czar.⁶³ It was also reported that Grand Duke Sergious had interfered with the stealing of famine money and had thus become unpopular with some of the wealthy classes.⁶⁴ Reports were also given about the discovery of adulterated flour in Russia.⁶⁵ All of this would probably dampen the ardor of many otherwise charitably inclined persons. But by the end of December that same paper also subscribed to the spirit of charity; in its editorial column it said that the "suffering from starvation in Russia is unequalled in the history of a civilized nation. It is time for the generous people of Iowa to act promptly by contributing."⁶⁶

Thus, by the end of December, Iowa was ready to

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Dec. 24, 1891.

⁶¹ *The Cherokee Times*, Dec. 24, 1891. It might be added that there is still little success in this area.

⁶² *Iowa State Register*, Dec. 23, 1891.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Dec. 23 and 25, 1891.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Dec. 27, 1891.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 29, 1891.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

roll up its sleeves and get to work on the problem of organizing relief for the Russians. The Proclamation had been issued and the Commission was set up. The press was in the main supporting the cause. The persistence of reports of ever greater disaster, and more to come with winter, gradually had pushed aside criticism of the Czar's government. The arguments in favor of helping the sufferers were unanswerable: Russia was our friend when "the union was in deepest trouble . . . Let us return this friendship—not, indeed, as a charity, but as a brotherly remembrance";⁶⁷ "No other year in the history of the state can bear any comparison to 1891 in the quantity or price of Iowa's agricultural productions";⁶⁸ we could, by giving, combine a humanitarian act with the practical aim of creating a market for corn;⁶⁹ and lastly, the argument which appeared most frequently, we should give out of gratitude to the Divine Providence which had given us so much.

Iowa was not the first in the business of getting relief work underway, but when she got started it was a most energetic enterprise. As Clara Barton, president of the American Red Cross, said: "In Iowa it took the form of a veritable crusade for a most holy cause."⁷⁰

THE WORK OF RELIEF

Tillinghast has written that Governor Boies did all in his power, both personally and officially, to aid the work of relief, and that the Proclamation would have been issued earlier had not the governor been home ill. But Iowans, as individuals, had already done much to get the work of relief started before the meeting of the Committee that the Governor had called for December 29. Clara Barton ascribed the original spark in Iowan relief work to Miss Alice French, the novelist who used the pen-name, Octave Thanet, and said that it was she who enlisted the support of Mr. Tillinghast, who

⁶⁷ *Davenport Democrat*, Dec. 28, 1891.

⁶⁸ *Iowa State Register*, Dec. 22, 1891.

⁶⁹ *The Cherokee Times*, Dec. 24, 1891; *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, Sept. 30, 1891.

⁷⁰ Barton, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

then became its organizer.⁷¹ Tillinghast also gave Miss French credit.

In a letter to Governor Boies, Tillinghast outlined the plan to aid the Russians by sending them corn. While giving Miss French credit for originating the idea, he said that "the subject has been discussed by ladies and gentlemen here for weeks."⁷² He had already corresponded with Miss Clara Barton, for she wired him that his views were acceptable and in agreement with those of the Russian Legation.⁷³ A week later she wired him to send her copies of the articles that had appeared in Iowa newspapers, and to also send copies to all the governors.⁷⁴ He had already sent copies of Governor Boies' Proclamation to all the governors of the forty-three states.⁷⁵

But what to ship and how to ship it, seemed the real problem in the beginning. The millers of America were shipping flour, and the people in Minnesota who had organized this were urging Iowans to join them. "We will represent all who contribute," wrote W. C. Edgar of Minneapolis to Governor Boies, "and we will be pleased, should Iowa's donation go with ours, to give it the most conscientious attention."⁷⁶ Or could corn be sent? Or should it be corn-meal, and how packed and shipped? "For foreign shipment the meal would have to be cooled before packing and we have no facilities for doing this," wrote an official of the Plymouth Roller Mill Company in LeMars.⁷⁷ Clara Barton said she would make the "fullest investigation concerning mills and shipping shelled corn."⁷⁸ Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture wrote to Tillinghast that the idea "to kiln-dry the meal is a good one, in view of

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁷² Dec. 17, 1891. *Governor's Office Papers*, 1892, Series II, Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines.

⁷³ Dec. 18, 1891.

⁷⁴ Dec. 26, 1891.

⁷⁵ Letter, B. F. Tillinghast (hereafter cited as BFT) to Governor Boies, Dec. 26, 1891.

⁷⁶ Letter, W. C. Edgar to Governor Boies, Dec. 26, 1891.

⁷⁷ Letter to BFT, Dec. 28, 1891.

⁷⁸ Telegram to BFT, Dec. 29, 1891.

the shipment over sea." This letter also suggested that the enclosure of recipes would not be necessary because the Russians would not be likely to understand English and, that for the purpose of making corn better understood and appreciated, the relief committees would have the services of Colonel Murphy, "our corn agent in Europe."⁷⁹ Meanwhile, should money be sent? L. Houriet sent the Governor five dollars the day before Christmas;⁸⁰ S. H. Mallory of Chariton wrote: "I subscribe \$100 for the benefit of the stricken sufferers."⁸¹ To spur on the work the Hon. W. I. Buchanan, chief of the department of Agriculture of the World's Columbian Exposition, and an Iowan, wrote to Tillinghast: "I see that Minnesota people have secured a vessel, and that the Michigan people are 'tearing up the earth.'"⁸² A further incentive to the work was suggested in a letter from our minister in St. Petersburg, Andrew D. White. He wrote that the Russians entertained warm feelings for the Americans, and that to relieve the sufferers, who were eating bread made of straw, rye and bark, was "not only a most religious duty but a most patriotic duty."⁸³

The Iowa Russian Relief Committee finally met on December 29 at the state capitol. Present at this first meeting were Hiram C. Wheeler of Odebolt, W. W. Witmer of Des Moines, Very Rev. T. M. Lenihan of Ft. Dodge, Will B. Barger of Chariton, A. Slimmer of Waverly, S. L. Dows of Cedar Rapids and B. F. Tillinghast of Davenport. Wheeler was elected president, B. Beeson, treasurer, and Tillinghast, secretary. The secretary was to make an appeal to the press and to correspond with the railroad and telegraph companies. The state was divided into eleven districts, each with a chairman and a treasurer, and in each district, chairmen were to be appointed for each of the ninety-nine counties. Ac-

⁷⁹ Dec. 29, 1891.

⁸⁰ Dec. 24, 1891.

⁸¹ Letter to Governor Boies, Dec. 26, 1891.

⁸² Dec. 29, 1891.

⁸³ Letter, Andrew D. White to BFT, Dec. 28, 189[1].

according to their decision that day, no state, district, county or other committeemen were to receive any compensation. The State Committee had ten members; there were nine district treasurers and eighty-three county chairmen, or one hundred two persons in all, in charge of the work of relief. For some reason, which the documents do not reveal, the ninth district, embracing Adair, Audubon, Cass, Guthrie, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Pottawattamie and Shelby counties, was not represented in the original organization; nor were there any county chairmen in the Seventh district which embraced Dallas, Madison, Marion, Polk, Story and Warren counties. This district also lacked a district treasurer. Some of these posts were later filled and there was of course some shuffling of personnel; it proved not always easy to find capable and enthusiastic people.

The private secretary to the governor, Clifford D. Ham, wrote to Tillinghast that the governor was having a hard time to find a good man to serve the ninth district;⁸⁴ one man was to be out of the state, another was down with the "grippe" and two others said they could not serve. Would Mr. Tillinghast please suggest someone? Many were called and none were chosen.⁸⁵

Within a month S. L. Dows of Cedar Rapids, chairman for the fifth district, begged to be excused on account of his health; Alexander Charles was appointed in his place.⁸⁶ In February the chairman at Ft. Dodge, the Very Rev. Lenihan, wrote that he could no longer serve because he was going to Europe.⁸⁷ One letter to Tillinghast nominated a retired farmer for a chairmanship who "will just split his sides to do something . . . you will have to flatter him a little when you write to him."⁸⁸ A. Slimmer of Waverly wrote: "it is not every-

⁸⁴ Jan. 16, 1892.

⁸⁵ On Feb. 4 Silas Wilson was appointed, but he too declined. *Governor's Office Papers*, 1892. Finally, on Feb. 22, B. F. Clayton accepted the appointment.

⁸⁶ Letter, Charles Alexander to BFT, Jan. 29, 1892.

⁸⁷ Letter to BFT, Feb. 23, 1892.

⁸⁸ Jan. 27, 1892.

body who is willing to neglect a portion of his business for the benefit of suffering humanity. Dubuque county seems a most difficult place to get a good man in to take hold of it."⁸⁹

The problem of securing good capable people was not, however, only a matter of finding retired farmers in search of social prestige, or enticing busy businessmen away from their pursuits for the sake of humanitarianism; the problem also soon became political. W. W. Witmer of Des Moines, lawyer, banker and prominent Democrat, suggested as early as the fifth of January that he might have to turn the work over to someone else; he said that he had been unable to do what he ought, that he had had trouble selecting committeemen, and that some of the newspapers discouraged the effort. A few days later, A. Slimmer quoted Col. Henderson as saying: "Don't know of one Republican who does not favor Russian Resolution [relief measure in Congress]. Retrenchment Democrat reformers are killing it."⁹⁰

Republican President Harrison in a Special Message to Congress on the fifth of January referred to the help that was already being organized for Russia: "It is most appropriate that a people whose storehouses have been so lavishly filled with all the fruits of the earth by the gracious favor of God should manifest their gratitude by large gifts to His suffering children in other lands."⁹¹ This message went on to say that since the Secretary of the Navy had no steam vessel at his disposal to transport the food being collected, the President was recommending that the Secretary be authorized to charter a vessel. A bill to that effect, appropriating a sum not to exceed \$100,000 was passed by the Senate 40 to 9. The House by a vote of 165 to 72 struck out the appropriation, virtually killing the entire measure and the

⁸⁹ Letter to BFT, Jan. 2, 1892.

⁹⁰ Letter to BFT, Jan. 9, 1892. David B. Henderson of Dubuque was one of Iowa's most influential public figures as Republican member of Congress from the old Third district from 1883-1903, and Speaker of the House from 1899-1903.

⁹¹ Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

whole question of federal aid was postponed by a vote of 93 to 87.⁹² The Democratic Congress had rejected the President's suggestion.

Whether this was caused by genuine champions of States' Rights, or by the oratory of statesmen who insisted that Russia should not be aided until the persecutions were halted,⁹³ cannot be decided here. The *Iowa State Register* contended that Tracy of New York had led the fight against the resolution "simply because he desired to keep as many measures as possible in the way of the Bland free coinage bill."⁹⁴ At any rate, politics had entered the picture.

In Iowa there was a reflection of the national political scene. A Joint Resolution to ask Congress to take action to provide transportation for America's gifts to Russia, was passed in the House on January 28, 52 to 42.⁹⁵ Only one Democrat voted with the yeas and three Republicans with the nays. It would be hard to conclude that the measure was not partisan. The Resolution passed through the tortuous path of more committees and more amendments and was finally lost. Some correspondence also attested to the partisan character of the measure. In answer to a request from Tillinghast, Irving Richman, Democratic representative, wrote: "Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to offer the resolution you enclose, but I am embarrassed by the circumstances that our [Democratic] representatives in Congress have taken a position against the appropriation of money . . . I have conferred with Governor Boies on the matter and he suggested that I write you before offering the resolution. If it meets your approval I can have the resolution introduced by some Republican."⁹⁶

"Don't lose courage over Congressional action," wired

⁹² Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁹³ Williams, William, *American Russian Relations 1781-1947*, Rinehart & Co., Inc., New York, 1952, p. 27.

⁹⁴ Feb. 17, 1892.

⁹⁵ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Fourth General Assembly of the State of Iowa*, Des Moines, 1892, pp. 90-95.

⁹⁶ Letter, Jan. 26, 1892.

Clara Barton to Tillinghast;⁹⁷ apparently he didn't for the work progressed in spite of the lack of support from the politicians. On the same day Tillinghast received word from the president of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railway saying that they would give free transportation for the food donated to Russia.⁹⁸ Other railways also offered free transportation to the seaboard. Through Mr. Buchanan in Chicago, Tillinghast received word that the Pennsylvania lines "will be glad to carry free their proper proportion of any donations."⁹⁹ The traffic manager of the Trunk Line Association wrote to Buchanan that all the roads heard from "expressed a cheerful willingness, each to do its part," but that to secure uniformity of action it was desirable to attempt to ascertain the probable quantity to be shipped.¹⁰⁰ It would also be necessary to make arrangements for the disposition of the freight when received at the seaboard, wrote J. F. Goddard, Commissioner of the Trunk Line Association.¹⁰¹ The chairman of the Central Traffic Association said that the request for free transportation was granted by the lines of that association.¹⁰² Buchanan said he was also willing to help make arrangements for ocean freights.¹⁰³ Tillinghast finally received favorable replies for free transportation from at least twenty-one lines. The correspondence regarding the arrangements, which were somewhat confused, was very considerable. Near the end of January the Trunk Line Association was still trying to determine the maximum quantity to be shipped by the Iowa Committee, to whom it was to be consigned, and what its disposition was to be then.¹⁰⁴ On January 30, the Central Traffic Association wrote to the local freight committees that the contributions were

⁹⁷ Jan. 7, 1892.

⁹⁸ C. J. Ives to BFT, Jan. 7, 1892.

⁹⁹ Letter, James W. McCrea to Buchanan, Jan. 13, 1892.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from B. A. Hegman, Jan. 16, 1892.

¹⁰¹ Letter to W. I. Buchanan, Jan. 21, 1892.

¹⁰² Letter, Geo. R. Blanchard to Buchanan, Jan. 18, 1892.

¹⁰³ Letter to BFT, Jan. 2, 1892.

¹⁰⁴ Letter to Buchanan, Jan. 25, 1892.

to be limited to about 100 cars of shelled corn from Iowa and five carloads from Indiana, among other shipments, and that the Iowa shipment was to be consigned to Clara Barton. As we shall see, this was later to be more than doubled.

The large number of letters and telegrams received by Tillinghast attest to the fact that, during January, many people were making donations, many of the district and county chairmen were pursuing the job with energy and enthusiasm and that Tillinghast himself had a full time job on his hands. "All thru those months," recalled his colleague, "Tillinghast did not come near his desk in the *Democrat* office . . . unless it was to write a letter or some such thing, in furtherance of the Cause."¹⁰⁵

The appeals to the people were put in terms of charity and gratitude—charity because it was "infinitely 'more blessed to give than to receive'" and gratitude, both to God, because "of the abundance with which He has blessed us"¹⁰⁶ and to Russia "for friendly acts in a time of great trouble."¹⁰⁷ One chairman in a hurry, M. B. Kendrick of Allamakee county, circularized a statement to the effect that seven firms were named to act as depots for corn, eight persons were named to receive cash, the editors of each of the papers in the county were to be special solicitors, as well as the pastors of each church, the teachers in the public and private schools, and the postmasters, and that eighteen township committees would aid in "this great work of relieving the starving poor of Russia"—"without further notice from me, as I wish to close up the work before Feb. 1, 1892." The letter, which accompanied the circular, was sent out by Will Barger, Chairman for the Eighth District, appointing county chairmen, and said in part: "Will you please make a little sacrifice

¹⁰⁵ Calkins, J. E., "Reminiscences of the late B. F. Tillinghast," *The Davenport Democrat and Leader*, Jan. 24, 1937.

¹⁰⁶ Oliver, Addison, (Committeeman), "Circular to the Citizens of Monona County."

¹⁰⁷ Stackpole, Wm. T., "The Russian Famine," *The Prairie Farmer*, Jan. 2, 1892.

of time in aiding us or have some person act in your place . . . Will you sit idly by and allow our fellowmen to die without an effort to save them? Please act and act immediately, and the blessings of humanity will follow you."¹⁰⁸

Donations and subscriptions began to pour in. As early as January 9, a letter from Henderson, Iowa said that "the farmers have subscribed a carload of corn for the Russian Relief fund."¹⁰⁹ President C. B. Soutter of the packing house in Cedar Rapids offered the use of his warehouse and a donation of "some of the product which Europe has been so earnest in shutting out, viz., pork."¹¹⁰ The use of a large hall in Cedar Rapids was also donated and the Florence Club gave a benefit performance to raise money for relief.¹¹¹ Muscatine county had raised \$550.00 by the end of January for the Russians.¹¹² But many gifts were small. The pastor of the German M. E. Church in Davenport forwarded \$11.50 to Tillinghast on January 21; four days later he sent another \$4.50 and asked for a receipt as he had to "report with voucher at [his] Conference."¹¹³ No doubt Iowa should also be credited with out-of-state gifts, inspired by our literature or press. One Chicagoan forwarded ten dollars to Tillinghast—"my dividend upon my stock in the Masonic Temple."¹¹⁴

Some wrote in for more information. "Please send me a copy of your Russian map showing the suffering districts," wrote one man from Ottumwa.¹¹⁵ The District Chairman at Ft. Dodge, the Very Rev. T. M. Lenihan, wrote that he was keeping the papers "well supplied with your [Tillinghast's] suggestions," and then

¹⁰⁸ Copy enclosed in letter to BFT, Jan. 4, 1892.

¹⁰⁹ Letter, E. A. Consigny from Mason Trimble.

¹¹⁰ Newspaper clipping, Cedar Rapids, enclosed with letter to BFT, Jan. 7, 1892.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Letter, W. H. Johnson, Auditor, to BFT, Jan. 26, 1892.

¹¹³ Letter, A. H. F. Hertzler to BFT, Jan. 25, 1892.

¹¹⁴ Letter, A. Hirschl to BFT, Jan. 2, 1892.

¹¹⁵ Letter, George B. Klingemeier to *Davenport Democrat*, Jan. 30, 1892.

went on to make one of his own: "why don't you get Bishop Cosgrove to endorse the movement?"¹¹⁶ He also said that number two grade corn was not obtainable at Ft. Dodge, and asked if it was not the sense of the Committee that money collected could be used to buy the best grade of corn and have it exchanged for number two in New York.¹¹⁷ Another inquiry addressed to Secretary Tillinghast suggested that Iowa's corn was not entirely dry and that therefore, rather than run the risk of deterioration in transit, money be invested in corn bought elsewhere for less; this letter also reported that 16 or 20 cars of corn would be shipped from Jones county.¹¹⁸ Some consideration was given to buying mills with which to grind the corn into meal, and sending these mills to Russia. One manufacturer wrote that his mills required too much power, "otherwise we would be very glad indeed to make a contribution in that direction or at least furnish mills at extremely low prices."¹¹⁹ The State Treasurer, who was also the treasurer for the Relief Commission, reported on January 26 that \$183.00 had been paid to his office, that is, money not converted to corn or other produce.

The work of relief was thus well under way in January of 1892. This does not mean, however, that it was not resisted in some quarters or unimpeded by problems. An article in *Der Demokrat* (Durant, Iowa) stated that the railroads in Russia "were so blocked with donations that a great deal would rot;" this article, wrote a solicitor, "threw a wet blanket over our soliciting. A few went back on their promises" in spite of the fact that the farmers who donated were promised that their names would be in the paper.¹²⁰ Somewhat of a problem also arose in connection with the relief effort being

¹¹⁶ Letter to BFT, Jan. 13, 1892.

¹¹⁷ Letter to BFT, Jan. 18, 1892.

¹¹⁸ Letter, H. D. Sherman to BFT, Jan. 28, 1892.

¹¹⁹ Letter, Barnard & Leas Mfg. Co., Moline, Ill., to BFT, Jan. 6, 1892.

¹²⁰ Letter, Randolph Fry to Col. G. Watson French, Scott County Relief Chairman, Jan. 29, 1892.

made in Minnesota. The Governor of that state had written to Governor Boies: "I believe it would be of mutual advantage should you arrange to ship your corn in the same boat that carries our flour."¹²¹ But early in January it had been decided to send Iowa's contribution of corn under the auspices of the Red Cross.¹²² W. C. Edgar, who was in charge of the Minnesota work, suggested that Iowa's corn could still go in the same boat, but have its portion of the relief supervised by Red Cross agents.¹²³ Hiram Wheeler wrote to Tillinghast that it seemed better to "send over corn by itself rather than with Minnesota wheat."¹²⁴ But by the end of January, Edgar wrote again to Tillinghast: "Is it your intention to have your corn go with our flour?"

There had meanwhile been two newspaper men claiming to be close friends of Edgar and Col. C. Reeve, the Minnesota Commissioners, volunteering to accompany Iowa's relief shipments, and then supplying local Iowa editors with exclusive copy. Edgar and Reeve came out with strongly worded denials of any friendship or connection with these newspaper men. This incident did not improve any possibly developing cooperation between Iowa and Minnesota. Edgar felt further impelled however to clarify his position to Tillinghast. He said he was in no way antagonistic to the Red Cross, but that since nothing was known about the Red Cross in Russia, he did not want to turn over any gifts to it. "It is our duty," he wrote, "plainly laid down by those who have placed us in charge of this cargo to first see what is being done by the Russian Red Cross before we deliver any part of it into their charge."¹²⁵

The persistence with which Edgar pursued this question is somewhat puzzling till we read of the efforts of the folks in Philadelphia. Edwin Stuart,

¹²¹ Dec. 26, 1891.

¹²² Contributions of flour from Iowa had already been sent to Minnesota to go with their shipment; letter, W. C. Edgar to Gov. Boies, Dec. 24, 1891.

¹²³ Letter, Edgar to BFT, Jan. 2, 1892.

¹²⁴ Jan. 8, 1892.

¹²⁵ Feb. 4, 1892.

Mayor of Philadelphia and Chairman of their relief work, offered the use of a ship to go under the American flag.¹²⁶ They were apparently anxious to be the first to send an American relief ship from the United States. Tillinghast wired back that "all shipping arrangements have been made . . . Is it not possible to have your ship start from Philadelphia and call at New York for the goods? I have wired Miss Clara Barton." Clara Barton wired back that Philadelphia declined taking cargo except from Philadelphia; three days later she wired Tillinghast that he need not approve of the Philadelphia plan. She then sat down and wrote Tillinghast an eight page letter in confidence that explained a good deal.¹²⁷ It was confidential because, "true to the history of all charitable work, the bees that make the honey carry stings, and who-so would hive them, must wear a mask and work cautiously. A certain business man who came to Washington from Philadelphia," she went on, "had apparently caught the fever and along with that came the ambition to send the first ship, and that from Philadelphia; but getting a cargo was not so easy, hence the offer to Iowa as well as to Indiana . . . they needed you more than you did them." She continued to explain that the people in Philadelphia could of course decide what they wanted to do but that this was not Red Cross work and that she could not be responsible for it, for, "we are bound by international regulations and customs." She complained that there was a general impression that the Red Cross did not want money, only "stuff old and new," and that "but for this, we should have called your corn before this, and let no one ship it for us."

The desire to get to Russia first and with the most, and all the publicity that would go with this, was thus possibly present also among the Minnesota people. The rivalry in this charitable work, or the sting of the bees that carried the honey, as Clara Barton so aptly put it,

¹²⁶ Letter from Gov. Boies to BFT, forwarding the letter from Philadelphia, Feb. 6, 1892.

¹²⁷ Feb. 8, 1892.

consumed a considerable amount of energy to judge from the correspondence alone.

Suspicion too, sometimes impeded the work. When Reeve arrived back from Russia, he was quoted in the *Minneapolis Journal* as saying that the "Russian Red Cross Society . . . is in very bad odor in Russia."¹²⁸ A Mr. Oscar Firkins, reading this article and having contributed to the relief work, wrote to Clara Barton for assurances. She refunded his \$102.20 with the comment: "So far as the Red Cross is concerned in my fifteen years of acquaintance with, and participation in it, internationally and nationally, this is the first charge I have ever heard against its integrity."¹²⁹ She went on to point out that Dr. J. B. Hubbell had been appointed to go to Russia and had a long personal acquaintance with many of the officials there. Tillinghast received accounts of all this and copies of Clara Barton's letters. She wrote to him that Reeve's remark about the Russian Red Cross "grew out of the old spite about loading the Missouri;¹³⁰ it is a poor thing to do but there is no doubt but Mr. Edgar intends to demolish the little Red Cross."¹³¹

In spite of doubts and rivalries the work went on, however, and more aid was given to facilitate it. The Postal Telegraph Cable Company and the Western Union Telegraph Company had given free use of their facilities for the leaders in the relief movement, and now extended that use to April 30, 1892. The railroads were further cooperative in granting passes; Miss Alice French was granted a pass by the Chicago and Northwestern, good to March 17, by the Illinois Central to March 20, and by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy. This novelist, whose first work was "A Communist's

¹²⁸ May 6, 1892.

¹²⁹ May 15, 1892. The reason some money was sent directly to Russia was that a Mr. Luly in the 3rd district claimed the Red Cross in Russia would give only to the members of the Greek church; hence the German Protestant donors sent their contribution to German Protestant Minister in Russia; letter, Josephine Hobbs to A. Slimmer, Apr. 15, 1892.

¹³⁰ The Missouri, carrying donations from northwestern states, left New York Mar. 15, 1892.

¹³¹ Clara Barton to BFT, May 19, 1892.

Wife,"¹³² did more no doubt than any other woman in travelling the state¹³³ and enlisting sympathy for the hungry in Russia.

The ladies interested in Russian relief had also organized and formed a Committee. This Committee, called by the governor, met at the Savery Hotel Feb. 2, 1892. Since the work was to be done through the Red Cross, it was called the Iowa Women's Auxiliary to the Red Cross, and received permission of the Red Cross to use its distinctive badge. All the members of the Auxiliary signed a pledge: "To inform one's self in regard to the Russian famine, to influence one's friends so far as one lies in favor of the objects of the auxiliary and to aid in all efforts of the auxiliary to raise money for the Russian Famine Committee by entertainments." Mrs. William Larrabee of Clermont was chosen as chairman and Miss Alice French of Dav-
enport as secretary. Each district, except the fifth, was represented by a chairman.

By the beginning of February, Tillinghast was able to wire Clara Barton: "Iowa is fully ready to start a hundred car loads of corn." Miss Barton wired back: "God bless Miss French and you." Isabel Hapgood, translator of many Russian novels, wired Tillinghast a congratulatory message, admitting that Iowa's work had preceded that of New York. Miss Hapgood asked Tillinghast a week later to send rye and wheat to plant in April, saying that this was what the Russian Consul General had recommended.¹³⁴ She also wrote to Tillinghast that she was anxious to furnish letters of introduction for those who would accompany the corn to some influential people in St. Petersburg, such as a cousin of Count Tolstoy who was "working hard to help the sufferers."¹³⁵

¹³² Afterwards incorporated in her book, *Knitters in the Sun*, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, 1888.

¹³³ She addressed women in Iowa City, Des Moines, Muscatine, Burlington, Mt. Pleasant, Clinton, Dubuque, and Sioux City, according to Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

¹³⁴ Feb. 12, 1892.

¹³⁵ Letter to BFT, Feb. 15, 1892.

But there were still frustrations to the work, and they were not all man-made. From about the middle of February to the middle of March, there were many reports which indicated that the work of relief was almost entirely halted by impossible roads. "The roads have been so bad that the farmers could not haul in any corn of late," wrote J. C. Engelbert of Marengo.¹³⁶ Johnson, Sioux, Kossuth, Muscatine and Sac counties also reported very bad road conditions. "We have simply been stuck in the mud," wrote one man from Muscatine.¹³⁷ Mr. Wheeler, President of the Relief Commission, wrote to Tillinghast that "in twenty years I have never seen the roads worse at any season of the year than they are here at present."¹³⁸ He also brought up another problem that was hardly anyone's fault: "I wired you last evening asking if no. 3 corn would do, as that is the best grade that can be obtained here." Mr. Kessey of Sioux county was also reported saying that "he could not obtain the proper grade of corn in his locality." John R. Lenon of Storm Lake wrote that he could not get grade two corn, and that he would send the money to Wheeler.¹³⁹ For his part, Wheeler reported having \$1,000 to invest from H. D. Sherman of Monticello and \$1,500 from Mr. Bigelow of New Hampton; he thought it better to distribute the purchasing to equalize the traffic on the railroads.¹⁴⁰ Worries, that "this corn will not bear shipment, if shelled, because it is not properly cured,"¹⁴¹ and that there won't be much to give because a six to eight mile strip of corn was ruined by a hailstorm,¹⁴² also came to Tillinghast's desk; each piece of correspondence is marked "answered," with the date.

Some misunderstandings also proved annoying and

¹³⁶ Letter to BFT, Feb. 23, 1892.

¹³⁷ Letter to BFT, Mar. 12, 1892.

¹³⁸ Mar. 4, 1892.

¹³⁹ Letter to BFT, Feb. 24, 1892.

¹⁴⁰ Letter to BFT, Feb. 29, 1892.

¹⁴¹ Letter, J. C. White, Rector of St. Patrick's Church, Marengo, to BFT, Feb. 16, 1892.

¹⁴² Letter, L. M. Kilburn, Fontanelle, to BFT, Feb. 5, 1892.

slowed up the effort. The Chicago committee of the Central Traffic Association reported receiving freight from Iowa when it had not yet sent any;¹⁴³ Ella H. Durley of Des Moines had not yet received her telegraph frank;¹⁴⁴ one telegraph agent had no instructions as "to the free use of wires" as late as the twenty-second of February;¹⁴⁵ and "dried meal" became "dried meats" in some telegrams, causing a good deal of confusion.

Despite bad roads, misgivings and misunderstandings, the work progressed during February. A bank statement from Clinton showed that the fund there had a balance of \$1,347.70; P. E. C. Lally of Denison reported \$400.00 in the bank and a car of corn in the elevator ready to ship;¹⁴⁶ Rev. Lenihan wired that they would have about six carloads of corn shipped from Ft. Dodge; Mr. Fleming in Burlington wrote that they "were ready to ship five and possibly six car loads of corn."¹⁴⁷ J. B. Butler of North English reported that he had 750 bushels of unshelled corn for Russian relief;¹⁴⁸ the Amana Society asked for cards and certificates for two cars—certificates and Red Cross placards for the cars were furnished by the Red Cross. Alexander Charles of Cedar Rapids wrote that he had shipped six cars of "as good a quality corn as any that will leave Iowa."¹⁴⁹ The Treasurer of the Iowa Relief Committee, Byron A. Beeson, reported near the end of the month that he had credited the Relief Fund with \$2,630.85.

The Ninth district, which had had such trouble getting a leader, was apparently ready to enter the race by the end of February in earnest—Mr. B. F. Clayton wrote: "I will have the preachers, the Press, the school teachers, the old men and maidens at work for us

¹⁴³ Telegram, Charles L. Shaw to BFT, Feb. 1, 1892; latter's reply.

¹⁴⁴ Letter to BFT, Feb. 9, 1892.

¹⁴⁵ Letter, J. W. Huichon, Algona, to BFT, Feb. 22, 1892.

¹⁴⁶ Letter to BFT, Feb. 12, 1892.

¹⁴⁷ Letter to BFT, Feb. 16, 1892.

¹⁴⁸ Letter to BFT, Feb. 19, 1892.

¹⁴⁹ Letter to BFT, Feb. 23, 1892.

within ten days."¹⁵⁰ March was further pushed along by another chairman who thought of enlisting the children in relief work. "As a moral educator," he said, "there is nothing they need more than a part in practical charity."¹⁵¹ The circular that he published was certain to enlist further support and sympathy: "Fathers and brothers are eating their own daughters and sisters while our corn cribs are full." Also early in March, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy extended its free transport to grain for the work of relief to May 1, 1892.¹⁵² Some of the ladies worked hard in March. Alice French reported that one lady was making a house to house canvass, and that Mrs. C. M. Hatchett of Waverly had called for twenty-five more badges for an equal number of new workers.¹⁵³ Lucy Patterson reported \$150 raised by the ladies of Sioux City;¹⁵⁴ the ladies in Mahaska county raised \$571 in the first three weeks of March;¹⁵⁵ Mrs. J. B. Harsh of the Eighth district sent in \$105.60.¹⁵⁶

Some of the charitable efforts went out of channels. Frances Parrott reported that "Cedar Falls . . . cut loose and having raised . . . about \$500 . . . cabled it direct to Russia in spite of our protest. What can we do about that?"¹⁵⁷ There is no record of Tillinghast's reply, but there is evidence that the subject was seriously considered. W. W. Witmer of Des Moines, though no longer a chairman, wrote: "we should not send money away from Iowa . . . I was under the impression then (at our first meeting) that our corn must be kiln dried . . . under no circumstances would I part with the money to be forwarded in cash."¹⁵⁸ The banker no doubt had his reasons. The decision not to send money abroad

¹⁵⁰ Letter to BFT, Feb. 26, 1892.

¹⁵¹ Letter, Will Ellsworth, Robins, Iowa, to BFT, Mar. 1, 1892.

¹⁵² Letter to BFT, Mar. 4, 1892.

¹⁵³ Letter, Alice French to BFT, Mar. 3, 1892.

¹⁵⁴ Letter to BFT, Mar. 21, 1892.

¹⁵⁵ Letter, Al Swalm to BFT, Mar. 21, 1892.

¹⁵⁶ Letter to BFT, (Creston, Iowa), Mar. 21, 1892.

¹⁵⁷ Letter to BFT, (Waterloo, Iowa), Mar. 2, 1892; see fn. 129.

¹⁵⁸ Letter to BFT, Mar. 9, 1892.

was later explained by Tillinghast in this wise: "Its value in food bought here would be greatly increased. Free carriage to Russia . . . to the interior of Russia was promised, thus adding a three-fold power to every dollar. It was also wisely determined to convert all money advanced into shelled corn, if possible in the locality where the money was given. Farmers could furnish grain often with less trouble than cash."¹⁵⁹

Though most of the people and the press were perhaps sympathetic to aiding the starving in Russia, at least since the end of December, 1891, it must not be assumed that all Iowans were so inclined. It is significant that there continued to be opposition and no little indifference, and that what was accomplished, was accomplished in spite of it. Henry Wallace,¹⁶⁰ a United Brethren minister, said that the ministers of Des Moines declined to take up a collection for Russian relief because "the liberally inclined would naturally contribute through other sources and the collection would necessarily be small."¹⁶¹ P. S. Bannister of Clinton reported he could not find anyone to conduct a "personal canvass without compensation."¹⁶² J. K. Montgomery of West Union wrote: "I have found it an up hill job to get people interested in the matter of raising funds for Russian Relief in this Fayette Co."¹⁶³ One newspaper clipping reported a Wm. C. Barker of New York, who had just returned from a commercial trip to Russia, as saying that "the larger portion of the famine sufferers are of a very low class of humanity, even worse than our Indians in their methods of living and laziness."¹⁶⁴ Even one of the appeals for aid stated that part of the cause of the famine was the fact that the Czar had driven five million Jews into fifteen provinces

¹⁵⁹ Tillinghast, *op. cit.* I, p. 336.

¹⁶⁰ Grandfather of the former Vice-President.

¹⁶¹ Letter to BFT, Jan. 20, 1892.

¹⁶² Letter to BFT, Feb. 18, 1892.

¹⁶³ Letter to BFT, Mar. 16, 1892.

¹⁶⁴ Clipping, Lansing, Mich., Mar. 13, 1892, forwarded to BFT.

of Southern Russia and that these Jews had, because of this, refused the customary loans to the farmers.¹⁶⁵

In addition to opposition or indifference, there was also, even at the height of the work of relief, ignorance of the program and its procedures. In the middle of February, James R. Gillies, the new chairman for Henry county, wanted information about conditions in the famine area.¹⁶⁶ One letter reported that there was "no one to give directions here for shipping a car of corn."¹⁶⁷ A. Slimmer of Waverly, who was in on the work from the beginning, was puzzled by the instructions of Feb. 10, 1892 which read in part, "shipments must be . . . consigned to Miss Clara Barton" and "contributions forwarded . . . must be consigned, care Charles L. Shaw," of the Central Traffic Association at Chicago.¹⁶⁸ Long after the work of relief was completed, J. H. Beinke of Little Rock wrote about the Congressional action which failed to make an appropriation for transportation of the food to Russia. "It is claimed here," he said, "that it was voted down by Democrats and I should very much like to know the particulars."¹⁶⁹

The bulk of the work was about done by the end of March though contributions kept coming in during April, May and even June.¹⁷⁰ The Relief Committee met, in rooms furnished free of charge in the Savery Hotel, ¹⁷¹ on March 30. The Treasurer turned over \$5,450.00, and it was resolved to buy and ship another 33 cars of corn. Any balance left over would be sent to Clara Barton and no more corn would be bought after March 31, but further donations would be converted to cash. It was also resolved at this meet-

¹⁶⁵ Signed by Alexander Charles, chairman at Cedar Rapids.

¹⁶⁶ Letter, J. J. Fleming to BFT, Feb. 15, 1892.

¹⁶⁷ Letter, C. R. Benedict to BFT, Feb. 22, 1892.

¹⁶⁸ Letter to BFT, Feb. . . . 1892; "Important Instructions" issued by the Secretary, Iowa Famine Relief Commission.

¹⁶⁹ Letter to Richardson Bros., Davenport, July 22, 1892.

¹⁷⁰ Cashier of First National Bank in Chariton forwarded \$6.05 to Governor Boies, June 17, 1892, for Russian relief.

¹⁷¹ Letter, W. L. Brown, manager, to BFT, Mar. 19, 1892.

ing that Tillinghast would go to New York to assist in making the shipping arrangements for the Iowa donation. The Committee voted him \$300 for expenses.

In New York an agreement was drawn up on April 19 between Simpson, Spence and Young and the American National Red Cross to ship the corn. The Tynehead was chartered and the amount put on board, as receipted by the shipping agents, was 116,357 "bushels of corn in bulk."¹⁷² Tillinghast said, a couple of years later, that there were "225 carloads, exceeding 500 bushels each," in the shipment.¹⁷³ This was then approximately correct. He had been given power of attorney and a check for \$20,000 to pay for the charter and insurance, by Clara Barton. "The value placed on the cargo and charter," wrote Tillinghast, "was \$83,500. The cost of the charter was \$12,651.62."¹⁷⁴ This latter figure, though sustained by Washington, D. C., and not Iowa, was given as \$13,200 in an article in the *Davenport Democrat*.¹⁷⁵

Appropriately, the captain of the Tynehead, John Thomas Tertius Carr, was of Russian stock, though born in Britain.¹⁷⁶ An address was made by Miss Barton on that second of May when the ship was ready to sail. She said that this was but "a tithe of the interest long due and joyously acknowledged." Tillinghast reported that feeling ran high for "there was not a man on that ship who had ever before been charged with the delivery of such a cargo."¹⁷⁷

The Tynehead reached Riga on May 27. Dr. J. B. Hubbell, General Field Agent of the American Red Cross, who had started for Russia on April 9, was already there and tendered the Iowa food donation to General Kaufmann, President of the Red Cross of Russia. While American flags were flying, he said that

¹⁷² Calkins, *op. cit.*, said 7,000,000 pounds of corn.

¹⁷³ Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁷⁵ May 2, 1892.

¹⁷⁶ Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 338; Vol II, p. 410. Tillinghast in his first article calls him "a Briton," but in the second article says that his father and grandfather were both Russian consuls at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 339.

the Iowans had perhaps felt that the rains which had been withheld "from their brothers in Russia have given the increase to their own crops . . . Our people as a people never forget that Russia has always been the friend of America."¹⁷⁸

CONCLUSION

Precisely how much Iowa gave is impossible to determine. As mentioned earlier, some flour was given via the shipment from Minneapolis and some funds were sent directly to Russia. Tillinghast estimated that "at least \$5000.00 was forwarded to Russia by individuals and church societies which did not pass through the Iowa Commission."¹⁷⁹ After all the corn had been bought, the state treasurer still turned in \$4,959, which was sent to Clara Barton. Tillinghast concluded that, "population considered, the total realized was larger than the aggregate of any other state."¹⁸⁰ In addition to corn, \$16,123.81 was reported by the Auxiliary as collected.¹⁸¹ Much of this however, was done by the regular Commission, and so reported. If the total was 225 carloads of corn, \$4,959 in cash to Clara Barton, \$5,000 in direct money gifts to Russia, and some account taken of the time and energy of the workers, it could safely be said that Iowa donated about \$100,000 to the relief.¹⁸² This would be a most conservative estimate.

And of course, of the workers, B. F. Tillinghast was no doubt the most energetic. He gave about five months of his time and about a thousand dollars of his money to the cause, if we can rely on the testimony of his colleague;¹⁸³ the two volumes of correspondence would tend to bear that out. Charles Shaw of the Chicago Committee of the Central Traffic Association, in asking for extra copies of the final report of the Famine Relief Commission, wrote: "You have no idea the amount of

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 418.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 411; The 3rd district sent \$1023.05 directly to Russia.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Report to the Governor.

¹⁸² It might be well to bear in mind that the dollar at that time had many times the purchasing power of the dollar today.

¹⁸³ Calkins, *op. cit.*

labor and expense our lines were put to for this noble work, which, so far as I am concerned, you were at the head."¹⁸⁴ W. H. Babcock, an attorney in Washington, D.C., wrote: "Certainly Iowa's work has been altogether exceptional and admirable; and Miss Barton seems to attribute it in great measure to your efforts. She might not wish me to repeat precisely what she said; but it would be anything but displeasing to you."¹⁸⁵ "Much of the success of the matter is do to you," wrote Governor Boies to Tillinghast.¹⁸⁶ In 1902 Tillinghast was named as one of four American delegates to the International Conference of the Red Cross held at St. Petersburg. At that time he and Clara Barton were received by the Czar and Czarina.

Tillinghast seems to have been an energetic and enthusiastic person. He worked himself up from frail health to being something of an athlete; he was a member of the Moline Boat Club and helped organize the Davenport Outing Club. His colleague also recalled that he did some trapshooting and that "he got the bicycle fever during the prevalence of that epidemic."¹⁸⁷ At the time of the Johnstown flood he was responsible for collecting over \$5000 within a week. He also solicited help for the victims of a tornado in northwestern Iowa and for a rice famine in India. But either his enthusiasm got the best of him or he did not want to offend the sensibilities of those who gave only from charitable motives, when just two years after the relief work he wrote: "no mercenary or even commercial consideration was thought of by any person who gave money, corn or other contribution to the famishing peasants in Russia."¹⁸⁸

The reasons why many Iowans gave money and corn to the starving Russians were several, and not simple. Most of the time, money, effort and corn were no doubt

¹⁸⁴ Letter to BFT, June 6, 1892.

¹⁸⁵ Letter to BFT, Mar. 21, 1892.

¹⁸⁶ Gov. Boies' private secretary to BFT, Feb. 23, 1892.

¹⁸⁷ Calkins, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁸ Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

given in the true spirit of charity. The dying woman in Kossuth county who asked for an inexpensive funeral so that ten dollars might be left for Russian relief,¹⁸⁹ was probably not considering some subsequent reward in this world. The many private letters, quite obviously not intended for publication, which make reference to "this noble work," or to the "sweet mercy that should drop like the rain of heaven,"¹⁹⁰ one could take as sincere, and as evidences of charitable motives. It should not be surprising that the heart-rending accounts of the suffering in Russia would stir up much genuine sympathy.

However as we have seen, there were also some who had other motives in mind—though this does not mean that they would be excluded from also having charitable motivations. Tillinghast himself wrote to the governor that the more he thought "of what a grand opportunity Iowa has to introduce abroad its staple product" the more he was willing to exert himself.¹⁹¹ Secretary Rusk wrote to Tillinghast to thank him for his expression of appreciation "of my efforts to enlarge the foreign market for our great American staple."¹⁹² Other Iowans also shared this awareness of commercial possibilities. "Iowa will be judged abroad by the quality as well as the quantity of its donations," wrote the chairman at Cedar Rapids.¹⁹³ The possibility of creating a market for corn in Europe was not at all overlooked—some who cast their bread upon the waters not only hoped, but expected, that it would come back a hundred fold.

It is difficult, to say the least, to know to what extent the press reflects public opinion; yet, it probably does to some extent, and to the extent that it did so in 1891-92, we could say that gratitude was also a motive—or an aid to charity. Gratitude to God for the biggest

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

¹⁹⁰ Letter, Cora Weed to BFT, Jan. 4, 1892.

¹⁹¹ Dec. 23, 1891.

¹⁹² Letter, Feb. 8, 1892.

¹⁹³ Letter, Charles Alexander to BFT, Feb. 13, 1892.

crop at the best price in our history, was stressed in numerous editorials. Out of a sense of gratitude, we should be willing to share our abundance; who could really enjoy a feast, knowing that his neighbor was starving? There was also a considerable emphasis on gratitude to the Russians for the fact that they had supported us, in contrast to England and France, during our great Civil war. Whether this aid was genuine or but "a myth"¹⁹⁴ is not relevant; the fact is that it was stressed in almost all editorials and speeches.

Some individuals engaged in the work of relief may of course have also been motivated by a desire for distinction in their own communities; many of the letters appointing district chairmen were answered with expressions of gratitude for the "honor" that the governor bestowed upon the recipient. Yet, we can believe that this was not an overriding factor for all, since it was often so difficult to find relief workers and many resigned.

Patriotism was another motive. Giving aid to the Russians was urged as "a most patriotic duty"¹⁹⁵ by our Minister Andrew D. White, and Tillinghast made reference to patriotic reasons both in his personal letter to the governor¹⁹⁶ and in his form letter to the county workers in the Ninth district.¹⁹⁷ In so far as the work of relief created international good will, those who participated in it were certainly good citizens. But perhaps state citizenship was even more important to many. In a letter to the governor, Tillinghast explained his interest in the work, in part, because of his love for Iowa.¹⁹⁸ Pride in Iowa, if not a first contributor, at least a most formidable one, is reflected in much of the correspondence and in many of the editorials.

There were also important circumstances that no doubt influenced the Iowans to give. The Message of

¹⁹⁴ Bailey, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁵ Letter to BFT, Dec. 28, 1891.

¹⁹⁶ Jan. 17, 1892.

¹⁹⁷ Jan. 25, 1892.

¹⁹⁸ Jan. 28, 1892.

the President of the United States, the existence of the Russian Famine Relief Committee of the United States, the earlier example of the Minneapolis flour people, a record crop in Iowa, then, on top of all this, Thanksgiving and Christmas—not even Scrooge could have stood idly by. Hostile feelings about the Russian government and particularly about its treatment of Jews and Germans, and the action of Democrats in the Congress of the United States and in Iowa's General Assembly, were overpowered by the thought of over thirty millions of Russian people in great suffering.

Willson Alexander Scott

June 23rd will mark the centennial of the death of Willson (or Wilson) Alexander Scott, a founder of the city of Des Moines and the man responsible for the site of the state capitol. In memorium, let us reflect, one hundred years later, upon the vision and industry of "Aleck" Scott, a true founding father on the Iowa frontier.

The ambitious young Scott moved to Fort Des Moines on the heels of the Dragoons in 1843, and soon envisioned its potential development. He prospered in business, becoming a prominent figure in the building of early Des Moines. Realizing the possibilities, he became a leader in 1855 in the movement that successfully brought the center of government to Des Moines, donating the land on what is now know as Capitol Hill and spending overly of his own resources to effect the transfer. Scott lost much of his property during the hard times that came in 1857. Still daring of spirit, he joined the Pike's Peak gold rush in 1859, but death overtook him on the way.

Willson Alexander Scott's grave, largely forgotten by the present generation, is located on the bluff at the south edge of the Capitol grounds overlooking the city to which he contributed so much—a man who symbolizes the aggressive spirit of the Iowa pioneer.

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